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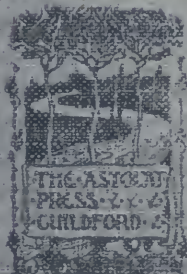
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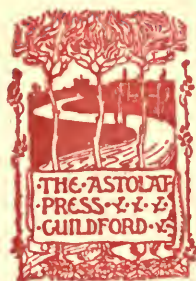
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POEMS.

POEMS

BY

A. ROMNEY GREEN



A. C. CURTIS
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DEDICATION

TO MY MOTHER.

TO thee, in whom the seed of fire divine
Took hold, and quickened, and began to be,
I yield the first fruits ; what is justly thine
How can I choose but dedicate to thee ?

The natural heir aught that is clear and sweet
Is of thy own untutored melodies ;
Aught that is deep and true from that rich sheet,
The poem of thy life, transcribéd is,

If aught there be :—and surely not a child
Of thine but drank of that ethereal stream
That flows in thee.—O, pure and undefiled
To use the spirit and express the dream

We owe to thee ; where we have failed the blame
Is ours, where prospered thine should be the fame.

NATAL

AN ODE.

In respect to its theory of the war this poem may be regarded as a pendant to "Meroz, An Ode."

I NEVER dreamed, sweet summer-belted Land,
Though winter-capped, whose uplands parchéd brown
Or grassy hills with many a torrent spruit
From thy mysterious Berg come rolling down
To the rich coast and that voluptuous town ;
Whose flowery shores upon the Indian sea
Dream all day long, and every luscious fruit
Bear to the constant sun ; whose odours fanned
By thy warm gales the grateful soul expand
With thoughts of heaven—where with my lovely bride
To other ends I came in fond pursuit
Of orange-wreathéd peace beneath a sky
For ever blue ; where stood our pleasant home
On those green heights that overlook the foam,
And languish for the purple sea ; where I
Dreamed many things—fair Land, I did not dream
That thy young life would first regenerate be
In this too rude but not unwelcome stream
Of cleansing war—the dread medicament
Of spirits cloyed with dull prosperity,
And sweet luxurious peace.—The crimson tide
Of battle pours from every mountain side,

The blood of men that perish to redeem
The souls of men—the blood of nations bent,
One on a mighty struggle to be free,
The other her great freedom so to use
Ev'n as, to uses natural or divine,
In this half-light by which we are toiling still
With barbarous tools but no unkindly will,
A people's conscience and the civic Muse
Direct.—Fair Land, the odour and the bloom,
Each aromatic shrub and flowering tree
With whose sweet name we shall remember thee ;
Fields of banana, sugar, maize, and pine ;
Groves where the orange and the lemon shine
Like stars out of their shadowy firmament ;
Those feathery cusps of scarlet flower that plume
The leafless grey stems of the kafir boom ;
The prickly cactus ; the delicious scent
Of the great blue-gums ; the perpetual sigh
Of ocean rising from that angry bar
To whisper in our wreathéd balcony ;
At night soft tales beneath an alien star
Of homes beyond that whispering ocean far ;
And the white moon-flowers shedding through the gloom
Waves of intoxicating sweet perfume—
These sights, and sounds, and scents remembered are
With trampling armies and the noise of war.
Like a rich mist they rise, and in their room
Armed men that spring to meet a warrior's doom
Or find renown, with aspirations high
Inflame the soul and fill the charmed eye.
We ached for war ; the soldiers diet spare,
The march, the star-beholding camp, to share ;

The desk, the office, and the bower to fly,
Haunts of pale avarice and dark-eyed care,
Unhonoured ease and hateful luxury ;
Whilst oversea her sunburned patriots come
For love the Empire's quarrel to assume.—
O, fair Natal ! thou beauteous Land for whom
Men have at last remembered how to die,
O, flourish bravely o'er the soldiers' tomb,
Make good his dreams, keep green his memory.

THE WORLD'S WISDOM.

YOU warn me—kindly, doubtless, you intend—
That what I now have set my hand to do,
Others, with heads as clear and hearts as true,
In venturing suffered such, or such, an end ;—
And well might their impetuous folly mend
The world's poor wisdom, such as this from you :—

Considerate wisdom how to curb and tame
The aspiring soul, to point the dolorous tale—
Less faith to dare than prudence not to fail—
Where this pale cast of wisdom spoiled his flame,
Who hath been found, the least of those who claim,
Our cautious emulation, to prevail ?

This is thy wisdom of the worldly wise ;
To err not from the straitened ways of use ;
Even a generous sanction to refuse
To that high purpose in the pleading eyes
Of those who seek some nobler enterprise,
Some less familiar destiny would choose.

Such must their own experience fulfil ;
But wherefore make it harder than need be
For want of help that might have come from thee ?—
Provoke the indomitable blind “ I will,”
The only office thine, whose wisdom still
Prevents like night the soul that would be free ?

Let come what will ; in failure though I chance
More than the loss of that I hoped to win,
With scorn or pity, yet the light within
Is fed by noble failure ; men may glance
Derisively—nay, friends may look askance,—
When I least conscious am of shame or sin.

Judge no man by his action ; were I told
To-morrow of some proven friend's disgrace—
Failure—or, worse, some deed unquestioned base :—
Do noisy facts the secret truth unfold ?
And shall I judge, who knew him from of old,
I, who have read his nature in his face ?

So I should justify my deed in vain
To those best judges who have loved me best ;
They will absolve my purpose unconfessed ;
And, when the chaff is winnowed from the grain,
If but a few so proved my friends remain,
I shall be well content to spare the rest.

Who seems to fail how often most succeeds !
Who seems successful most how often wrought
Only the dream and shadow of his thought !
High purposes in his imperfect deeds
Are all that man can boast ; but these he needs,
Lest what great power he have should come to nought,

Insatiable, pure ; that not his own
Desire of ease prescribes, nor greed of place
In the industrious world ; to these we trace
All high and fearless action ; hence alone
The immortal artist borrows light unknown
To the mere use of art, the poet grace.

For us, however of a lesser breed,
The universal law holds none the less ;
He questions not of failure or success
Whose nobler purpose hath inspired the deed ;
The consequence by righteous heaven decreed
He will abide, and in the end shall bless.

Look not too far ; it doth demean the soul ;
But to its virtue thy fair enterprise
Commend with instant faith ; have only eyes
For the strait path and for the shining goal ;
What thou must, suffer ; what thou canst, controul ;
But let misfortune take thee by surprise.

However hazardous the issue be
My purpose holds the adventure to pursue ;
The soul may live, and weather all things through—
Make all experience welcome as the sea
To prove her course undriven there, and free,
Her starry loves significant and true.

THE TRYST.

HOURS of the long blue summer day
Have passed in tedious splendour by ;
The last pale rose hath flushed away
Out of the western sky.
Deep in their shadowy sylvan bower
A lover waits the appointed hour ;
His heart is beating high ;
He waits, but has not long to wait ;
His Love is at the garden gate,
And they will steal an hour from Fate
Although it were to die.

A field unseen had she to pass
Ere just below that sheltering oak
Her footsteps in the moving grass
On his faint spirit broke.
She comes from the devouring light
Of festal halls into the night ;
Beneath her rich white cloak
Are flowers and jewels—the amorous air
Of heaven is in her starlit hair—
Light-footed, eager-hearted, fair
She comes upon the stroke.

Their deathless vow, in any word
Unbreathed, but spoken from their eyes
Only those listening stars have heard

That shape our destinies.
If with the stars they could foreknow
The pains of love, the starry woe,
How fortunate and wise
They two would seem if they might stand
Thus heart to heart, and hand in hand,
Forever in that charmed land
That shadowy paradise.

AMOR IN EXTREMIS.

THOU askest if it be indeed a sin
To let the indomitable tyrant in,
Or whether sin with Love can never be?—
Is it a sin if some tremendous tide
Sweep down the bulwarks of presumptuous pride
That man builds up against the eternal sea?—

Ambition some, some poverty, disease,
Or filial piety, forbid to please
This tyrant too importunate : and still
Their monitors conspire with curious art
To guard that virgin citadel, the heart,
And raise up walls about the faltering will.

O, let them fall ! for, not to be withstood,
Sweet heaven commands to trust the mighty flood,
The tide of love, which constant is to heaven,
Whilst from our feet the great world slips away,
Blindly revolving its laborious day,
With all that we have hoped for, feared, or striven.

Seductive, sweet, as to the sea the moon,
Though earth forbid, doth heaven present the boon
Of love, the crown of life ; who hesitates
Must serious reason use ; 'twere not unwise
With sudden hands to wrest so fair a prize
From the arbitrament of doubtful Fates.

Nay, that we love at all ; that love to us
Appears so fair by ways so dangerous,
Must argue heaven-ordained occasion here
Of our true heritage, which to have proved
Ours by desert and loyalty unremoved
Shall make it doubly ours and doubly dear.

And yet thou knowest I had no wilful scheme
In this rash love save to indulge a dream
Unknown to thee ; our stars in heaven have erred
Each to the other from its broken arc ;
Just so a pair of children in the dark
Had met, and so caught hands without a word.

So fair thou art, so loved ; and blest with all
That could so fair and loved a thing befall ;
So native here, but to the world so new,
Where various trouble is, and wasting care :—
Is't not a sin the rose so rich and rare
To pluck from these bright gardens where it grew ?—

But, unadorning these, to which belong
Thy so loved graces, dost thou fear to wrong
Me, who shall wrong thee—how should I withhold,
When thy dear will chimes with my own desire ?—
That—“ ill-bestowed,” thou sayest,—my love will tire,
Or thine become less precious than of old ?

Or dost thou bid me seek—the world is wide—
An easier, say, but not a fairer bride—
The rose without a thorn ?—O, vain debate !—
Had I not found, as I have surely done,
The best and loveliest underneath the sun,
In finding thee I owe enough to Fate.

Thou sayest—and through all thy sweet advice
Runs womanlike the thirst for sacrifice,
The fear of wilful, undeservéd, joy—
That not alone their ban forbids our love,
But thy unworthiness ; that use must prove
How poor thy virtues, time thy charms destroy.

This is the task of Love : that he refine
Clay the most human to the most divine
Unto the need of one enamoured soul.
Love asks the fond, the pure and faithful, heart ;
Of one frail nature by that heavenlier part
He is content to know and judge the whole.

And thy sweet seniority—a grace
More to adorn thy soul, but in thy face
All unperceived—what could more deeply move
Faith, passion, chivalry ?—so wondrous fair,
Inviolatè still, thou to attend my prayer
Stayed in mid-heaven, nay, made a child, by love !

Say thou hast but ten years—the sweetest ten
Of womanhood that is vouchsafed to men—
Ere those rich charms do pale :—the rose of June
No lovelier is than the frail autumn leaf ;
Nor were there lawful cause to see with grief
That sunlike beauty changed to the moon,

Less prodigal of warmth and light, a guise
More eloquent to my admiring eyes
Of thy pure history and the eternal law
Which the deep heavens obey—a face to wean
My spirit from the earth to things unseen,
Even as those waters the pale moon doth draw.

Once fair and well-beloved, the envious wage
Is never forfeited to wasting age

Still to be fair ; but if more sacred ties
Do not avail thee in the after years,
If all in vain the tribute of thy tears,
These hard-won meetings, desperate "goodbyes,"

Then vain are all things beautiful and deep,
And love a dream, and life a fevered sleep
Well lost in that profounder sleep to be.
But should my loyal devotion, early faith,
Tire for a day, think how the mournful wraith
Of thy loved form at night would steal on me,

Mysteriously fair, as first it stole,
Insidiously, sweetly, on my soul,
As ne'er before insidious and sweet :—
Dost thou not think that face, those wistful eyes,
Where no reproach, but only pardon, lies,
Would win me back again to these dear feet ?

Though Love, who dwells with his prophetic eye
On every omen, of a morning sky
So red and angry well may augur rain,
Could aught in nature so unlovely be
That love should ever be desired by thee,
And, where thy lover is, desired in vain ?

A summer day of its exceeding heat
May changed be to thunder ; love, too sweet,
By its own passion clouded ; heaven, too near
The unstable earth, may banefully excite
Humours and heats, its deadly opposite,
Which break down all the electric atmosphere ;

And love be seamed with fire, and judgment done ;
But o'er those warring elements the sun

Is shining still, whose witnesses they are ;
And life and love brought terribly to birth
Where that great peace is broken by the earth
Which doth prevail in heaven from star to star :—

Where soul in flesh takes wondrous power and form ;
And not the laws which govern tide and storm

Are marvellous then as those which rule the soul—
Rule from the tropic lightnings of its youth
To where, in that vast silence north and south,
The aurora streams above the frozen pole.

Life is distraught with dangers ever fresh
'Twixt heaven and earth, the spirit and the flesh,

But Love the pilot of that shadowy clime—
The ambassador of heaven, lest we forget
Our lineage high, through all the world to set
His royal standard o'er the sons of Time.

A self-taught power and providence to use,
Shall we the bright insignia refuse,

The starry privilege of love forego ?
Can such affections on the heart prevail
Only to prove the will that must not fail—
Is it for nothing that I love thee so ?—

Start at thy coming, and divinely burn
With every gesture of thy fondness learn—
Thy instant soul in each unspoken thought
That lightens inwardly celestial grace,
And vanishes across the perfect face

To that pure spirit so expressly wrought ?—

Feel every delicate colour, scent, and sound,
Blent evermore with thee, and broken round
Thy melting path, like moonlight on the sea—
From the dark world a fragrant incense drawn,
Even as its shining vapours to the dawn,
And all my being lost in prayer to thee ?

Is it to voyage with those pale faces set
Across the sea, that travel and forget—
Strive to forget—that they have ever known
Such perilous joy, such cruel beauty ; torn
By sleepless passion ; through a world forlorn
Of hope and comfort wandering alone ?

Sometimes, star-gazing there, they will be caught
Out of their woe into the heaven of thought,
Till love grow far away and little worth ;
Sometimes they will be faithful ; sometimes, numb
With that long agony, they will succumb
Pleasure to seek of the unhallowéd earth.

I think that all thy lovers of the sweet
Spring days gone by are kneeling at thy feet
To urge my cause ; to plead against the doom
How cruel they know ; whilst every poet's heart
That loved and suffered leaps to take my part
With stern entreaties from the loveless tomb ;

His, the halt poet, that cruel fair could sting
The world to wander like a wounded thing ;
And his to whom Beatrice the shades of Hell
Made easy, and the steep ascent to heaven ;
And his, the unfortunate, ignobly driven
By Leonora to a maniac's cell.

And other two there be, with faces pale
And sweet from musing on a different tale,
Who died in one another's arms ; they learned
The luxury, and they would dare the pain—
Giovani's knife and Dante's hell—again,
Of desperate love that is not unreturned.

Wilt thou not learn of these ?—must those pure eyes
Make so unkind a Providence—be wise
To smile at love, as even those that prove
Victorious dare not smile—whilst heaven and hell
A cloud of such dire witnesses compel
To urge the headlong argument of love ?

Wilt thou not learn of these ?—the mighty flood,
The tide of love, is full ; 'tis time we stood
To sea ; the ebb, they say, will leave behind
No haven here, but empty channels strewn
With shadowy wrecks beneath a waning moon,
The dry and empty bottoms of the mind.

Cold blows the wind ; the sky is overcast
With driving clouds ; the voices of the past,
The curlews' cries, are borne from shore to shore ;
The salt pools glimmer to the moon ; afar
The milk-white breakers thunder on the bar,
Through the long night returning nevermore.

Through the long night returning not to us :—
Black river bottoms—places hideous
And bare, where once there flowed the living tide
Of passion—'tis a world of ghastly dreams,
Where loveless lives are spent like those thin streams
The interminable sandy flats divide.

In that dark world no ray of hope can reach
The abandoned soul ; each interest new and each
New joy serves only to renew his loss.
Nothing I did but I should wish for thee
The scheme to praise or the result to see,
Which without thee were dull and empty dross.

Do thou but hear them, Sweet, and in thy breast
Permit, as it is pure, each deep behest
Of Nature ; breathe no heavier cloud between
Our loves, unsure of satisfaction here,
Which yet, to some diviner purpose dear,
Can never be as if they had not been.

O, pitiful, between those slow replies,
But, O, how sweet, that face, those far off eyes,
Where all thy soul is set to understand !
Distressed in choice ; most fearful of the wrong
Where most inclined ; but willing to be strong—
But happy, since I hold the little hand—

Was ever any face so fair before ?—
Or I thy lover if I still forbore
Thee to advise too warmly, thee to woo ?—
So tender, and so infinitely sweet,
That I could die in kissing these dear feet,
Who am not worthy to unloose thy shoe.

O, if sweet death and sudden were decreed
To all mankind, how all their hearts that bleed
With long desire would hasten to obey
The one great law, and with delicious sighs
Each to his love, and with adoring eyes,
The whole creation breathe itself away.

'Tis Love shall turn the world to God ; as soon
From making these laborious days the moon

Shall lay the earth to rest ; the tides that run
So fiercely now, and in such narrow ways,
Shall have their will, and bring the earth to gaze
Mutely beneath a steadfast seeming sun.

A FAREWELL.

SUMMER, so sweetly ushered in,
Hath passed, my Love, hath passed away ;
And if to love hath been a sin
Judgment is done to day.
Would it were death, and swiftly done
Ere those dark clouds have veiled the sun !—
How can we ever say
Slow words, a death in life to knell,
Of agonizing, long, “ farewell ? ”

That we must always love, our chief
Desire and woe, our faith so fair,
Shall with the fading autumn leaf
Make sweetness of despair.
At eventide before my eyes
The vision of thy face shall rise,
And float above me there,
As when the evening star appears
More beautiful through mists of tears.

Thy mournéd loveliness shall haunt
My heart through many a wintry hour ;
O'er mine thy dreaming soul shall vaunt
Its old mysterious power.
The silvering buds shall all unsheathe
Dim lights of thee—a perfume breathe
Of thee from every flower,
And whispers from the early green
Of what hath been, of what hath been.

THE AUTUMN WIND.

THE sad, the wild, the Autumn Wind,
All vanished sweet things
From the dark heaven I call to mind ;
The deathly odour clings
Of summers that are left behind
On my tempestuous wings.

Awhile from leafy bough to bough
I led the summer on ;
And many a lover's whispered vow
Bore to the joyful sun ;
But all the sweets of summer now,
The sweets of love are gone.

And now, to speak their general grief
In one severer strain,
From places of the withered leaf
I mourn the life, how vain,
The loves, the joys of men, how brief,
Through all the night complain ;

Their spring, how desperately sweet
With promise—only given
The summer of a short conceit—
Their leaf-like souls, how driven,
When earth is dead beneath their feet,
On all the winds of heaven !

PHYLLIS TO DEMOPHOON

AFTER OVID.

DEMOPHOON, thy royal hostess, I,
Phyllis of Rhodope, a just complaint
Make of thy absence now too long. When first
That hornéd moon grew to the full, we said,
Thy mooréd ships were to be mine. But now
Four times the moon hath waned, four times fulfilled
Her shining sphere, and the Sithonian seas
Murmur no tidings of the ships of Greece.

If thou countest the days which we in love
Reckon so carefully, thou wilt perceive
That my rebuke comes not before its time.
Hope lingered long ; for ever are we slow
That to believe which to believe is pain—
Pain to the loyal and unwilling heart
Of love.—I have deceived myself for thee ;
And often have I thought the stormy south
Would hurry back thy sails ; and I have cursed
Theseus because he would not let thee go—
If it was Theseus who detained thee thus ;—
Or off the shoals of Hebrus I have feared
Thy ship was swallowed in the foaming sea.
For thee, O faithless, I have tired the Gods
With prayer before their incense-burning shrines ;
And often, when the sea and sky grew fair
With some propitious wind, said to myself,

“ If he is living surely he will come.”
 My trusting love hath now imagined all
 Misfortunes that can stay the course of love ;
 All fond excuses I have made for thee.

But thou art absent still ; nor do the Gods,
 By whom thou swearest, favour—or thy love
 For Phyllis doth not urge—thy safe return.
 Demophoon, alike thy words, thy sails,
 Thou gavest to the wind—words that were void,
 Sails whose return I still await in vain.
 Tell me what have I done save that I loved
 Thee all unwisely ? by that very sin
 I should have more endeared myself to thee :—
 My only fault, O faithless, that I gave
 Thee hospitality and too much love—
 Fault that should find favour at least with thee !
 Where are thy vows, thy honor, and the hand
 That clasped my own in love ? where is the God
 That was so often on thy perjured lips ?
 Where now is Hymen, pledge of bliss to be,
 The sponsor for long years of wedded love ?
 To me thou swearest by the stormy sea,
 Which, having sailed so often, thou mightest hope
 Safely to sail again ; by thy grandsire
 Of the white horses—if 'tis truly he—
 Who calms the stormy sea, thou swearest too ;
 By Venus and her weapons, lamp and bow,
 So direfully strong against myself ;
 By Juno, genial goddess, who presides
 O'er wedded happiness ; and by the rites—
 The mystic rites—of her who bears the torch.

If every deity outraged by thee
Should wreak their wrath on thee, thou, one alone,
Would'st not suffice their fury to appease.

And I in madness even re-equipped
Thy broken fleet, that safely might depart
The ship in which thou left'st me ; oars beside
I gave to urge thy flight ; my hurt, alas !
My own goodwill inflicted on myself.
I trusted in the soothing words of which
Thou had'st so many ; in thy name and race ;—
I trusted in thy tears—and are they too
Taught to deceive ?—are they too false, to flow
As they are bid ?—I trusted in the Gods ;—
Wherefore so many pledges ? I had been
Enough deceived by any one of them.

And yet I grieve not that I gave to thee
Harbour and hospitality ; but these
Ought to have been the limit of my gift.
How shamed I am I added unto these
The gift of my own self ;—ah, how I wish
The night before that one had been my last,
Whilst yet I might have died a virgin queen.
I hoped the best thinking it was my due—
A hope how just that looks but for desert !
In truth it is no glory to betray
A trusting girl ; surely my innocence
Deserved respect ; yet by thy lying words
I was deceived, a woman, and in love.
May the Gods grant this deed of thine to be
The summit of thy fame ; and may there stand
Thy statue in thy city midst the race

Of old Aegeus ; and thy noble sire's,
Magnificent with titles, opposite.
Where shall be read of Scyron and the great
Procrustes, Sinis, and the Minotaur ;
Of Thebes subdued in war ; and Centaurs too,
A monstrous brood, despatched ; and the reverse
Of Pluto's dusky arms ; but hard at hand
Thine with these words : " The man by whom a queen
" Suffered herself to be deceived in love."

From that brave record of thy father's deeds
Was Ariadne's foul betrayal all
Thou could'st admire ?—that deed which calls alone
For censure or excuse the only one
That thou could'st imitate ?—thy sire's false faith
All he bequeathed, false-hearted son, to thee ?
She has at last—I do not envy her—
A better husband ; and she sits aloft
Drawn by tamed tigers ; but the Thracian youth,
Those whom I scorned of old, avoid me now,
Saying that I preferred a foreigner :
Saying, " Let her to learned Athens go ;
" Some other one shall rule o'er warlike Thrace."
All things are judged by the event :—be all
His hopes in vain who argues thus, and his
Deep purposes all uneventful be.
If now the sea were foaming with thine oars
I should be quickly said to have desired
My people's welfare even as my own.
And yet I never dreamed of them ; nor will
My dream be crowned, nor ever will my baths
And festal palaces resound with thee.

That form of thine for ever is impressed
Upon my eyes, tearing thyself away,
When off the sick and dizzy shore thy fleet
Hung just about to sail; and thou didst dare
To embrace me, and to fall upon my neck
With kisses passionate and fond as though
Thou could'st not bear to part; and with my tears
To intermingle thine, and to complain
Of such a cruelly propitious wind;
And, breaking off at last, "Phyllis," thou said'st,
"Most certainly expect again thy own
"Demophoon."—Ah, me! should I expect
Thee who didst leave me never to return,
And those white sails that o'er the faint blue edge
Of ocean dropped for ever?

Yet I do

Expect thee still; O come, though late, to her
Who loves thee so, that thou may'st keep thy pledge
In all except the time.—Ah, what am I,
I that am so unhappy, praying for?
Ev'n now perhaps some other wife is thine,
Some other love ill-omenéd for me.
No Phyllis did'st thou know, I ween, so soon
As I was lost to thy forgetful eyes.
Ah me! should'st thou enquire who Phyllis is,
Or whence she comes?—I, who did give to thee,
Demophoon, in thy extreme distress,
Our Thracian harbours and a splendid home;
Whose wealth my own increased; whose want my wealth
Gave many gifts and would have given more;
I who, a queen, subjected unto thee
The very realms that King Lycurgus ruled

So niggardly of yore, too great to brook
 A woman's power ; from ice-clad Rhodope
 Stretching to where Haemus with pleasant groves
 Is shadowy, and the sacred Hebrus rolls
 His waters to the sea ; I who, a maid,
 Gave my own self to thee, whose girdle thou
 Unfastenéd with thy perfidious hand.
 Over those bridals croaked the ill-omened bird
 A warning hoarse, and pale Tisiphone
 For vengeance shrieked upon the accursed deed.
 Alecto too was there, her tresses wreathed
 With writhing snakes ; and like to funereal brands
 Our torches glowed upon the ghastly night.

Now in my agony I pace the rocks,
 The reedy dunes, and every height from which
 The open sea is spread before mine eyes.
 Whether day gladdens the earth, or the chill stars
 Are bright above, for ever do I watch
 What winds are on the ocean ; when I see
 Sails far away at once I think the Gods
 Are kind to me at last ; down to the sea
 I run, and scarce the fickle waves that beat
 The everlasting shore can turn me back ;
 And, as the sails draw nearer, less and less
 Firmly I stand, and faint away and fall
 At last into my maiden's outstretched arms.

There is a bay curved like a bended bow,
 With lofty headlands jagged and abrupt.
 Hence have I thought to hurl my body down
 Into the waves below ; if thou dost still

Delay thy coming this will be the end.
There will the tides conspire and bear my body
Unburiéd to thee, where, 'fore thine eyes,
It shall compel thy pity at the last.
For though thou should'st excell iron and flint
And thy own self in hardness, thou wilt say,
"Not thus, O Phyllis, should'st thou follow me."
A fire within me burns for nothing less
Than death to end my shame ; and on my tomb
Shall be inscribed thy name—thy name by whom
I was betrayed ; such envious words as these
Shall keep alive thy fame : "Demophoon,
"Her guest, of his royal bride's unhappy death
"The treacherous cause became ; a victim she
"Of her deep love and his inconstancy."

THE BURNS CENTENARY.

O, FICKLE is the Muse, and hard,
Who hath by many a latter bard
Thy envious laurel richly starred,
 If I may share
No such her genial regard,
 And tuneful care!

For though long since thy great compeer
Had ravished every heart and ear
Of those to whom thy memory dear
 Can never die;
And moved the quick insidious tear,
 The reverie high;—

Though he, in fame and hapless fate
So soon in heaven to be thy mate,
Came that fair eve to dedicate
 A lovely bloom—
Himself how lowly, thee how great—
 Upon thy tomb;—

(Soon 'neath the quiet tomb he slept,
Himself no less divinely wept;
Himself the would-be love-adept,
 The sufferer lone,
No friendlier spirit could have leapt
 To greet thy own.)

THE BURNS CENTENARY.

Superfluous now, and less divine
Sons of the long illustrious line,
We emulate the high design
 To sing thy praise ;
And more with alien splendours shine
 Those deathless bays.

Since it has thus become the mode,
Forgive, from thy august abode
That I should here increase the load,
 And swell the crime,
Of flatteries so much bestowed
 In honied rhyme.

I think, of all the laurelled host
Wandering Elysian fields, that most
Thy else not unattainted ghost
 To aspirants here
Of our peculiar sin might boast
 A spirit clear.

Untaught, O happy soul and wise,
The vacant-glorious verse to prize ;
Untaught to polish and revise,
 Or how to use
The arts that attitudinize
 Our modern Muse ;

Taught to exhale, as the fresh earth
To utter flowers, thy natural mirth ;
As hurricanes the bitter north
 To speak thy woe,
Thy lays reveal the artless worth
 Of long ago.

No ruder breath thy Atlantic curled ;
With such untutored sweetness purled
The river whence that book was hurled
Which did not woo
The homage a degenerate world
Contends to do.

Since Shakespere's not a soul so clear
Of mean ambitions ; quick to hear
The immortal harmonies severe
Of love and pain
Earth had brought forth ; and now thy peer
Doth not remain.

To Wordsworth, Byron, each some trace
Of thought or passion thine ; some grace
Or splendour of thy Titan race
Thou didst bequeathe ;
A soul that in these latter days
We hardly breathe.

Unhealthy spirits, undevout,
We boast our various-sided doubt ;
We write discursively about
The things ye proved,
Or suffered, ere ye sang them out
So much beloved.

And over our laborious art
Presides a genius less the heart
Than that pale demon of the Mart
That sucks our power,
And in our very love bears part
To blight the flower.

THE BURNS CENTENARY.

Thou, to glad Nature more akin,
And used the generous love to win
Of many a rustic heroine,
 Wouldst often tell
Some rude desire, impetuous sin,
 Or wild farewell.

But sweetly, naturally told,
Those loves were never bought for gold,
Nor written only to be sold ;
 The will malign,
Offending where the heart is cold,
 Was never thine ;

But native virtue, still preserved
Without the law ; or, if thou swerved
Thence, by some direful chance unnerved—
 Ah, who shall blame
Whatever deep experience served
 The sacred flame ?

We see and love thee ; leaving now
The brilliant throng that wreathed thy brow
To reassume a youthful vow,
 A rustic life ;
Thy hand again upon the plough,
 And Jean thy wife.

And now the sire we fondly see
Thy sons instructing at thy knee ;
And now the truant lover, free
 Among the groves
Where to be loved immortally,
 Thy Chloris roves.

And though by each too passionate sense
Borne to the earth, deriving thence
Antaeus-like thy spirit intense
 To strive and shine ;
Recruiting thence each large expense
 Of power divine.

And now upon thy untimely end,
Dissentient all, our hearts attend
With woe ; the thunder-clouds descend
 Upon thy head ;
To happier realms our prayers commend
 The mighty dead.

Thou couldst not prosper here ; subdue
A soul to loftier dictates true
The ignoble interests to pursue,
 The arts contrive,
Which, save with some insatiate few,
 Suffice and thrive ;

Nor yet renounce the world with those
Who less regard its flattering shows,
And for its thorns condemn the rose
 Of youth and love,
Some heavenlier virtue to propose,
 Or joy to prove.

Unskilled to rule, but not content
To serve the flesh ; improvident,
But uncorrupt, thy spirit went
 A devious course ;
In virtuous effort foiled, or spent
 In vain remorse.

THE BURNS CENTENARY.

But how to Judge thee !—shall we chide
Great Nature ; for their laughing pride
Her roses ; for its headlong tide
 The mountain stream ;
The poet's life, the poet's bride,
 The poet's dream ?

Nay, for herself she wields the scourge
Her own too sweet excess to purge ;
Her starry purposes converge
 Beyond the sphere
Of passion or ruin to which they urge
 Her creatures here.

Her poets—least do they require
Our censure—to the withering fire
Of their rich life and long desire
 A hapless prey,
As from a slow funereal pyre,
 Consume away.

Thy soul is to the empyrean gone ;
The verse in which it strove and shone,
Quickened so painfully, lives on,
 And lightens forth,
To shed a lustre never wan
 About the North.

MEROZ.

AN ODE. 1895.

“Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

YE victims, cruelly forsaken, dead,
And unavenged, whose dust and ashes piled
In murderous drifts the winter through have been
Unwept, unburied, on your desert hills;
Or whom to weep, and dress your mouldering bed
With some poor weed, in those sparse vales but green
That once you loved, new-coming April mild
Perhaps from heaven a gentle shower distils;
Or, hurled from desperate crags, whose bones unseen
Lie sepulchred in many a dark ravine,
Washed by the melting snow; you, spoiled of bread,
Disarméd, broken-hearted, crushed by dread
Insensate force, by hideous art beguiled;
Whose streaming blood by infidels was shed,
That stains the Orient red,
And that great river to the Persian sea,
Your martyrdom is also on our head!
Though of your blood all seeming undefiled,
Their dumb accomplices perfidious we,
Who left the tyrants still unvisited

To indulge and flatter their malignant wills.
O, faithless that we are, and pitiless,
How shall our ancient name be reconciled,
And its long tenure of a glory fled ?
Our memory by the ages unreviled,
In whose ill-gotten custody you bled ?
How shall sweet nature purify and bless
Once more the wilderness
Incarnadine, whose thirsty soul was fed
With rivers of your blood ? its fields are spread
'Neath heavens that smile no more, of loveliness
And joy for ever disinherited.
The wind now mourns you there with void alarms
Of death by night ; and now more awful calms
Than death ; ere this dire end to your distress
Could not you move the blasts of heaven your wild
Entreaties to address
To the four quarters of the earth in arms ?
They heard, but might not be solicited ;
And o'er the victims of its vile excess
That hideous soldiery smiled.
Your wives, your daughters, suffered nothing less
Than your strong men, but there was no redress ;
Your very mothers were not spared with child.

From your blood-stained mountain solitude
You called upon our laggard arms in vain ;
And over many a fruitful vale and plain,
O'er many a smiling sea and mellowing wood,
There ebb'd away unheard that piteous strain ;
Or in our ears the long complaint would rise
Only to fall again.

For men pursue, as they have still pursued,
 Unmoved, through many a blind vicissitude
 Of joy, desire, and pain,
 Each that vain shadow, burying like a hood
 His soul in darkness, that too envious good
 Self-chosen next; and, in a softer mood,
 If some high motive, generous, pure, and wise,
 Employ a chord to which the heart replies,
 This earth-born progeny, an impious brood,
 Of hopes and fears, with base solicitude,
 Correct the will, the impulsive hand refrain.
 Or, newly burning from the tale of blood,
 With wrath, and fear, and pity, in their eyes,
 Fired by the tale of those death agonies,
 Some furious prophet on the platform stood,
 The priest his prayer, the merchant gave his dole;
 Unprofitable charities, for where
 The heart is sick the members are not whole.
 Our old heroic virtue fails and dies;
 Our soul is drugged with small philosophies,
 Yea, dead to indignation or surprise.
 And such a race, despoiled by time, that thief
 Of power unused by love, unmoved by grief,
 Shall not escape the avenging destinies.
 The inevitable curse we too must share
 Here to accomplish that prophetic scroll
 Of what has been; this way the high green leaf
 Is faded, and a people lose controul
 Among the nations, and the arts, their chief
 Glory and use, decay; but whilst they spare
 The oppressed and weak, whilst they espouse or dare
 Some cause forlorn, some arduous enterprise,

The fair but unsuspected flowers arise,
To adorn the state, or to instruct the soul,
Of art, the child of virtue ;—flowers how brief,
Now they are forced with vain expense and care,
Our various arts and letters !—nothing worth—
Fair-seeming, ineffectual, as are
These diplomatic, slow, humanities.
For want of public virtue to compare
With their sick dreams, for want of purer air,
Our feverish imaginations breed
Unexercised by love, and only bear
Exotic blossom or luxuriant weed,
False to adorn, or shameless to declare,
The lean or filthy soil on which they feed ;
That speak our poverty of soul ; the dearth
Of high and noble thought ; the insatiate greed
Of wealth and power and place ; the poor disguise
Of cruelty and sin, whose monstrous birth
Is suffered now upon the groaning earth
With none to avenge it and with few to heed—
The riotous passions and unholy mirth
Of all men summed in one tremendous deed.

And Nature too was passive ; vengeance none
She uttered there, discovered no surprise ;
Too blind and regular to seek or shun
Our weal or woe, to all entreaty proof,
From that unequal strife she held aloof,
She wrought no omen in the orient skies ;
But o'er that massacre the morning sun,
From fields of blood to feed on crystal dew,

Rose daily, and was unashamed to rise,
 Upon our careless eyes.
 The heaven from height to height of stainless blue
 Melted as though with love ; the harvest grew
 Golden upon the hills ; and Day, at least
 With sanguine feet begun,
 And awful eyes from that embattled East,
 Was resolute her smiling course to run
 Where courage, faith, and pity, were deceased.

And could she find no voice for your despair,
 Dumb Nature, that should move these hearts of stone ?
 In syllables of thunder rend the air
 Of stifling capitals—your desperate ills
 Write in the starry firmament, nor moan
 Your woes upon the tempest ?—move the wills
 Of princes to a noble rage for war,
 And call the nations your distress to bear—
 Nor breathe a whisper of your futile prayer
 To one rapt dreamer on the lonely hills ?
 Had she no harmony of undertone
 Set to some other sadness than his own
 Deep in the music of her woods and rills ?
 No message from her heavenward-dreaming firs,
 Acquainted much with death, and death with you,
 On his faint spirit blown—
 Not even the uneasy phantasy that stirs
 The soul presentient of a grief unknown ?—
 Though privy she with those dark ministers
 Of sleep to all your woe ; and nowise new
 He to her mystic lore set there alone,
 Where through that spiral foliage, and through

Pale interspaces of mysterious blue,
His soul dissolved away to mix with hers.

If from the people of that stricken shore
Came any sound of wailing over sea,
By our dull senses it was undivined ;
So many a burthen of our own we bore,
Enduring many a pitiless degree.
And when the days of summer were declined,
The woods of summer in their yellow leaf,
We thought the face of nature only wore
That visage to the temper of our grief ;
We thought that mournful radiance only shone
Each for his heart's expression and relief ;
And many a sufferer that the woods resigned
Their glory on the wind
To suit the winter, deathlier cold and wan,
Through which his heart, that fain would die, lived on,
Remembering still some glory that was gone.

The visionary thus too far engrossed
With his voluptuous grief his mood perceives
In lovely Nature ; but some innermost
Sad meaning incommunicable grieves
Her spirit ; some vaster sentiment pervades
The Autumn Isle ; for Albion's shrunken coast
Hath forfeited the boast,
And broods upon her glory that is lost,
Where heaven appoints to wield an arméd host.
In humiliation and remorse she weaves
A crown of mystic leaves,
Whose woe to match the lover's or the maid's

Our small imagination misconceives.
 Vainly above her woodland aisles and glades,
 Her crumbling abbeys, ivy-mantled halls,
 And immemorial shades
 Of oak and pine, the fair domains that fed
 Her mighty wars, her chivalrous crusades,
 Which the victorious infidel bereaves
 Of old renown, she wore that wreath, and shed
 That wreath in vain o'er many a careless head,
 Remembering on dark autumnal eves
 The people she deserted and their dead.
 The winds begin ; the last sere oak leaf falls,
 And rain, and snow, upon a country red
 With blood that is not hers ; the sea-bird calls
 Along a coast banked high with threatening cloud,
 To wrathful winter dedicated, loud
 With hurricanes ; the indignant sea upbraids
 That coast significant—the granite walls,
 The unstable beaches, and the hollow caves—
 Of hearts by no divine compassion bowed,
 With dreadful rumours that were stolen and spread
 Far by the tide ; and, not to be gainsaid,
 Doubtless your ghosts out of their weltering graves
 These pale and perjured shores have visited
 Some pity of your woeful plight to win ;
 Doubtless across the succour-tarrying waves
 The land of your dire persecution fled,
 And in the winter tempests wailed our sin.

Long time we lay in iron winter bound,
 Unwitting how our traitor front declared
 Our traitor heart in lands that must resound

Through all the ages with the crime we shared.
And though all night o'er the tempestuous deep
Those spectral visitants were eddying round
They did not vex our sleep.
And wept all night, though never heard to weep,
Our shame, and mingled darkly in the storm
That shed our laurels, spirits far renowned
Out of the warlike past ; each awful form
Of warrior, monarch, bard, and prophet crowned
With leaves that are, whatever winters roll
Above their graves, unwithered ; for the soul
Aspires most bravely where the blood runs warm
From battle ; with winged words Maeonides
Consents, whilst he who fought at Marathon,
And those less warlike bards, of classic fame
Therefore less fortunate, the truth proclaim.
And gazed out of the winter heaven profound
A patriot's eyes with quenchless fire that shone,
And dark prognostications, ill at ease ;
The immortal voice that strove with Macedon
Appeals once more—nor that heart-stirring sound
Was all in vain—to ignominious Greece ;
Whilst for her loss of wide dominion
Rome's stalwart warriors rose up to blame
The fatal arts and luxuries of peace.
And scarréd yet with many a glorious wound,
Their testimony high to bear with these,
Those knights who sought the East in arms and came,
Though unvictorious, home vast piles to found,
And towers of learning, the illustrious name
Recite of him who first our stammering speech
In sweet melodious numbers taught to run ;

And his of Italy, who still doth teach
 The world a music ever new begun.
 And—more importunate for vengeance none—
 That city of the sea-girt palaces
 Lepanto urged, with her inveterate flame
 Of hate to arm the mistress of the seas.
 Next that Plantagenet, who long ago
 Of his French Katherine desired a son
 To beard the Turk, extols the royal game
 Of war and venturous Agincourt to shame
 Our cold deliberation and the breach
 Of treaties thrice performed. And he who sung
 That warrior king, and saw our navies reach
 Through the bright west a virgin world, aglow
 With new desire, and saw them overthrow
 Their rival too presumptuous, first became
 With human things perplexed, and could not frame
 A language for his woe,
 That such a race should ever speak the tongue
 That Shakespeare spake with men who did not know
 Fear of a mortal foe.
 That poet next, the awful Puritan,
 In classic numbers called upon the Lord
 To avenge his slaughtered saints ; and to and fro
 Across the sea a brood of giants poured
 Remonstrative—the bards and heroes sprung
 From that world struggle with the tyrant who
 Himself was reared in war ;— a mighty chord
 They struck upon the storm : what men can do,
 And how thereby a nation's lyre is strung,
 Trafalgar arguing and Waterloo.
 And the tempestuous sea took up the word

Which knows what men can dare, and how they can,
When refuge none the riven planks afford,
Their indifferent souls above the deep suspend,
Self-centred, luminous, meditative, hung
Like stars in heaven to see the approaching end.
In war the soul of nations, as of man
In desperate straits, brought face to face with death,
Is disembodied, self-collected, stung
To moods divine, and starlike in the van
Of action sits contemplative ; the breath
Of life from each heroic deed she draws ;
She glows to hear the tumult of applause ;
And crowns the race with an immortal wreath
Of Pericles or of Elizabeth.

War do not not seek : but if a noble cause
Be offered let the scourge of war descend ;
Let men be ruined ; let their hearts be wrung
With sorrow for their lovely dead ;—thus saith
The Muse, and thus the choral edict ran
Commending war, in which with one accord
Poets and warriors dead their voices blend
With His, the Voice divine, who came to send
Not peace unto the nations but a sword.

Spring comes at last ; that winter surge might fret
The rocks, and reach out of the midnight vast
White hands to threaten all the guilty shore ;
But man's iniquity hath never set
A term to spring that she should come no more.
Reluctantly that funeral robe she wore
The earth puts off at last
For veils of tender green ; but not before

We knew our guilt—your woe—could she forget ;
 Nay, with her future rooted in her past,
 Sadness pervades her flowering woodlands yet.
 And even here are many souls that mourn,
 Though seeing this beauty here of bud and leaf
 We may assuage the tyranny of grief
 And salve the memories of old regret.
 But on your hills forlorn
 How should there come the untainted April morn
 With sweetness from their verdurous thickets borne ?
 Of rape and murder and the midnight thief
 They reek to heaven ; and if the purer breath
 Even of spring, were not infected too
 What but your graves should her fresh flowers adorn ?
 For you who still remain, distressed and worn
 By fear, cold, hunger ; pining for relief
 That never comes ; the bitterness of death
 Tasting so many times—what should you do
 With flowers before you die ? They only woo
 The soul that in itself has some reserves
 Of strength or consolation ; they require
 Peace ere they come with delicate scent and hue,
 Like oil and wine, upon the very nerves
 Of virtue, meditation, and desire.
 But how should you, poor sufferers, construe
 These hints of lovely Nature ? at your feet
 The very flowers ashamed must all retire
 Soft eyes from your distress ; and no more you
 With their divine intelligence to greet
 Your hills are kindled in the morning blue,
 Your mountain air is vigorous and sweet.

Weep not that she is fallen now so low—
Armenia—she, if anything she hears,
On earth, can spare the insult of our tears.
Our wrathful incredulity was slow
To own, as futile to avenge her woe,
And still our grief is idle ; but the years
Of that destruction into which she fell
Must hold us guiltiest of all our peers ;
And still from many a fœtid dungeon cell
Is darkly rumoured that which not to know
Were bliss, though chequered by our deadliest fears ;
No fables that have been conceived of Hell
Could surfeit more our disinclined ears.

EPILEGOMENA.

THE Riddle of the World shalt thou refuse
To hear—the arraigned virtue to contest?—
My ear the adventurous Muse
Thus to her great perennial theme addressed ;
And thine whom ever that large interest
From things particular, however small,
At once compels to lose
Thy soul in contemplations general :—
Thou, for whomever the ethereal hues
Of morning with a guileless charm invest
The accused earth, in whom the orient skies
Thy faith restore, thy judgments readvise—
The Riddle of the World shalt thou refuse
To hear, to ponder and resolve, that lies
In this dark page so terribly expressed ?
Be not faint-hearted ; do not think to rest
So soon thy tired wings : some divine use
Pain surely has ; by each in his own breast
The trial is suffered and the truth confessed.
This we believe : and if a single one
Must suffer anywhere beneath the sun
Thousands as well may suffer ; if at all,
Little or much—the pathos unaware
That may be read into the wistful eyes
Of some fair child—the mortal agonies
Of those strong men—what matters to the abstruse
Intelligence ? Let not the ingenuous quest

Of truth transforméd be to pale despair
Like his, the all-knowing bard, skilled in the laws
Of nature, yet too pitiful withal,
Who, meditating long upon the fall
Of Lisbon, lost his God ; or his, the mild
And great philosopher, who yet, because
Of those famed reptiles, horribly destroyed
As well by beasts as men, the shuddering void
Of unbelief crossed as a little child
The dark—O, suffer not such blind despair,
Born of this horror of insatiate Death,
On thy aspiring wings to give thee pause
And dash thee headlong from the upper air
Of truth, my habitation undefiled,
My element. But that the world is fair
Believe—believe, though darkling underneath
Those open gates of heaven there gape the jaws
Of hell—yea, though to each mysterious end
Its scythéd wheels so cruelly ascend,
Though its victorious arms are bathed in blood,
The great soul of the World is fair and good.
The great soul of the universe, the breath
Of nature, the informing will, the cause
Of all that shall be, is, or ever was,
Judge as a friend, judged only by the best
He is or does, not by those actions base,
Or cruel, or vain, that contradict the grace
Of thought and purpose written in his face.
Judge at high noon ; judge in the sunset hour ;
Nor in the sombre night thy faith deny ;
But on the ulterior truth and equity
Of that great power inscrutable depend

As on the love and wisdom of a friend.
Beneficent and terrible, that Power
Who rules the sunset and creates the flower,
Inspires the bird with song, and paints on high
That many coloured bow across the sky ;
Who makes the wind a voice, the stars a goal,
To the unrestful and aspiring soul
Of man, his dreadful counterpart, a strain
Contrives the while of undercurrent pain,
A mystery of woe—yea, though he wreath
The harp with flowers—that grave Musician draws
From every trembling string ; by his decree
Race preys on tortured race ; the weak must die
To serve the strong ; and thus a monstrous brood
Of creatures he begets to seek their food,
The snake with poisonous fangs, the shark with teeth,
The tiger arms with cruel teeth and claws,
To war below ; the falcon from above
With taloned heels to strike the alarméd dove ;
The fierce barbarian to the ancient feud
With blind hereditary lusts endued—
Yea, with dire appetites akin to love
The flesh to prosper and the soul to prove,
The purposes of heaven and earth to blend,
He arméd man, the angel and the fiend ;—
And nature against man, and man to seek
His bread in that rough market where the weak
Go to the wall, with instruments as rude,
The passions and the elements ; virtues
Primeval, vices reputable, send
Man to contend with man ; the storm winds rend
His sails, and like a mist upon the flood

He disappears ; by pestilence and war
He perishes ; towards the hungry pole,
As moths about a flame, his chiefs contend
Brave crews to venture, precious lives to spend ;
And now against the Turk what scions remain
Of Christian faith or warlike chivalry
Must ache to die ; even to him who fears
Death death must come at last ; the race
Must perish ; the bereavéd earth shall roll
For ages through the azure fields of space
Disconsolate, insensate, unpossessed ;
Her lord, the sun, his fire shall cool and wane.
All things their Maker doth unmake and mar
In Godlike scorn of each particular
Till thou mayst only close thy wings to set
Thy feet on that high star
Where of their types and processes he rears
The monuments in heaven, beneath thee far
Things what they seem, deposed without regret,
Above thee and about thee what they are.
Thence the great earth invisible to thy
Frail sense, or thence a point of light appears,
Or thence behind its time ten thousand years,
In its primeval loveliness, and yet
So soon to die, so easy to forget.
Thence are the heavens before thee as a scroll
Spread out, and some deep meaning in the whole
Is all divulged ; that music of the spheres
Which is eternal—yea, though there be none
To hear it—which, if any mortal hears,
The discords of that awful harmony
Vex not his charmed ears.

Wouldst thou all things created should exist
 For ever whilst in bright Orion glows,
 Dear to the prophet's heart, that fiery mist
 Of worlds unborn ? wouldst thou the wondrous throes
 Of birth and death—wouldst thou the sense of tears
 In human things remit ?—On some high mood
 Just to be born the spectacle to see,
 And to resolve in counsel with thy peers,
 Were immortality enough for thee.

Pain without death, death without pain—these own
 Our argument—a first rude stepping stone
 One to ascend the intellectual throne
 From which the other is despised ; these twain
 Unite—red death by fire and sword—to make
 The old, the eternal question heard again ;
 This of the other some fresh sting to take,
 Some fruit to render vain.—Not to assume
 That upon which the oracles are dumb,
 Uncertain, fabulous, or disagreed,
 A life beyond the tomb ;—
 Not to assume in thy adventurous creed
 More than the least sufficient—aught that may
 Ever become ev'n as a broken reed
 To mortals yet unborn ;—Oh, for the sake
 Of mortals born to die, and hearts to break
 With sheer compassion, thou from what is plain
 To all—that virtue cannot be in vain—
 That God exists—do thou make manifest
 Good in this ill ; once more essay to bend
 This bow beyond their strength ; Ulysses be
 Perhaps to some forlorn Penelope,
 Some faith that hangs perplexed upon the loom

Of night and day, where solitary night
Undoes the work of day ; once more intend
Thy soul to pierce this mystery—indeed
A dreadful gloom, but that must needs be bright
Which throws the shadow, intercepts the light.
—Often, when we out of the evening gloom
Of some deep vale on to a sunlit height
Have issued, thence according to our wont
To watch whilst universal Nature dwells
In joy, and love, and wonderful delight
O'er the great pageant—watch the bloom that grows
On earth of shadowy green and gold, the bloom
In heaven of violet, daffodil, and rose—
Like faith a gorgeous fabric on the loom
Of night and day perplexed—the sun ere he
Descended made us clear cut parables
Of night ; for there, like giants at a hunt,
Turned the same way to mark his lair, there stood
Gray crags and grassy knolls, with blushing heath
Crowned, or with high and leafy citadels,
To catch the sun, and golden in the front
Of their long shadows on the purple fells.
Thus are the hemispheres of night and day
Each by the other bounded every way,
And this ethereal cone of darkness shod
With light, as crowned with splendours infinite.
Thus every shadow of disease or vice,
Sorrow or death, a front of paradise,
Though from its own dark tenement unguessed,
Bears for a season to the flaming west.
And when, obedient to the level ray,
The shadows lengthen giant souls, that else

Were unobserved rise up to seek for God.
 Like mountains to the giddy edge they rise,
 That traversed all day long the motley disc
 Of earth unmarked, a moment opposite
 The sun to stand and disappear. Each crest
 Of purple rock, each rosy obelisk,
 Tremendous crater, sharp cut precipice,
 Flushed with the sunset, mounts in turn to write
 His character in heaven transforméd quite—
 To change the mind of God—yea, to impose
 His image on the stars before he goes
 Into the dark, into the great unknown.
 The earth their footstool is, the stars their crown—
 Stars in that clear celestial ether thrice
 Distinct and glorious, jewels without price,
 Daggers and swords and crosses, shooting fires
 And palpitating lustres—hopes, desires,
 Renunciations—flames of sacrifice
 And stars of love.—One with the woof and warp
 Of heaven we are ; a Spirit that is one
 In all that's suffered, or enjoyed, or done,
 The fabric weaves, the harmony inspires.
 Through short-lived instruments of various tone
 The music breathes, the Spirit ebbs and flows,
 And breaks the tortured frames and snaps the wires.
 But of Himself and to Himself alone
 Justice the instant Deity requires ;
 And finds in that wild music and is gone,
 A strain now tremulous with joy, now sharp
 And loud, a wailing of tempestuous woes,
 Ev'n as the wind from an Æolian harp,
 Whither is none that knows.

THE WARRIOR HERO.

1895.

WHERE is the warrior hero in our land
Whom this dire crisis, lovely as a bride,
Comes to rejoice ; comes grateful to his pride,
Finding the heart that loves to understand
And swift resources ready to his hand
Of action ; who prevails the adverse tide
Of circumstance triumphantly to ride,
The man who comes, and sees, and take command ?

Let him arise, and like the morning sun
Disperse these vapours of inglorious fear,
Who'd rather his compatriots one by one
Should perish to a man than buy too dear
Peace with dishonour, perjured lives that none,
Whilst Islam stands, can cherish or revere.

DEGENERATION.

THE swords were sheathed, the purple blazon furled,
Of chivalry, the minstrels passed away,
Whilst maidens were dishonoured day by day
And martyrs slain by fire and sword, or hurled
From rocky height and steep; the lips were curled
Of Islam in contempt, whilst round him lay
And watched that violence they feared to stay
The armaments and navies of the world.

Now, if our dead might ere repeat a stroke,
Should from their scabbards leap those angry blades
That wrought so bravely in our old crusades;
If ever from the tomb they even spoke
This were sufficient the tremendous shades
Of Milton, Wordsworth, Byron, to evoke.

ANOTHER ENGLAND.

ANOTHER England in my dream I knew ;
Like this of ours dominion wide she bore,
Her sceptre and her arms from shore to shore
Of continent and ocean ; but to do
Against all odds the tasks that empire threw
Upon her was her aim ; and thus she wore
A front the guilty nations cowered before
And triumphed always with the just and true.

But see her now ! in solemn treaty sworn
The champion of a cause her heart alone,
If not a common faith, should make her own,
This perjured name become ; for which the scorn
She hath procured by mortals yet unborn
Shall justly be preserved and handed down.

THE WRATH OF HEAVEN.

THE wrath of heaven may like our own be slow
But, surer than our own, shall come though late
The Moslem tyrant to precipitate
From his abuséd seat ; to overthrow
That dynasty of Hell ; and we, who know
Ourselves the instrument, yet idly wait,
Shall in the general ruin participate,
And that obstructed vengeance undergo.

For those whom heaven her deputy hath made
Must hold themselves erected more, a tower
Of Justice, Truth and Virtue unafraid.
Once be they disconcerted, from that hour
Their doom shall be assured ; their sceptred power
Be withered from their hands, their strength dismayed.

JONAH.

THOUGH sorrow, fear, and shame for thee immerse
My soul, until I wish my pen a sword,
And that slow coming vengeance of the Lord
With thy too well deserved woe rehearse,
My country dear !—what profits this poor verse,
When he to thy dark capital, whose word
Was beauty, virtue, love, must now afford
This shade prophetic of a monstrous curse.

Step from thy canvas, thou stupendous Shade !
As once to Nineveh thy voice be sent,
“ Yet forty days ” ; O, make our hearts afraid ;
Our sins chastize ; our impious thoughts prevent ;
In dust and ashes we may yet persuade
The Lord of his great mercy to repent.

THE RIGHTEOUS TEN.

THE hour of help gone by, I dropped my pen,
Expecting fire from heaven ; not once nor twice
I sought fresh signs and images of vice ;
And I who thought to find the world a den
Of thieves and liars, fell on valiant men,
Sweet and true women, jewels without price,
And not a scape-goat for the sacrifice,
But everywhere I met the righteous ten.

Merciful God ! who knowest the human soul
What riddle's here ? what poison at the root
Of lives so fair can yield such bitter fruit ?—
Over the form and action of the whole
Have these, the beauteous members, no control ?—
Be Thou our dreadful Judge ; let us be mute.

THE CURSE.

I THOUGHT the curse repealed ; I looked again ;
Fair leaves the tree displayed, but meagre fruit,
And a small worm in every tender shoot
Preyed greedily, and made her buds in vain.
The curse had fallen ; and the curse was plain
In arts and letters cankered at the root
By vile self-love ; in lives that wore the suit
Of virtue not without an eye to gain.

Knowledge that men forget to consecrate
In noble use ; the power that men employ
To selfish ends of avarice, lust, and hate ;
The tools of war become an idle toy,
Corrupt, that should have edified the state
As means of love and instruments of joy.

SEA MEMORIES.

HERE in these old sea-gazing haunts the weight
Of thought, the tyrannies of hope and fear,
To memories sweet give place, the toils of Fate
To memories sweet give place, and disappear :—
How in the golden days of childhood here
Morning and evening thus I loved to roam,
And watch the dense blue slumberous ocean rear
Those lines of league-long rollers, wreathed in foam,
Up the steep barriers of its rock-bound home.

Here the old miracles are practised still ;
In crucibles of heaven the day is fast
Resolved ; the ethereal hues of sunset fill
The deep, the pure, the illimitable vast.
Here all my heart is softened with the past,
And things that were become as things that are,
And fair as those which shall be at the last ;
Quit of the tedious world I am, yea, far
Remote and alien as the evening star.

On these red-crumbling but luxuriant heights
In childhood thus I often paused to see
The long coast slumbering in the western lights
And dreamed that 'neath those setting suns might be
A fairy land girt by a fairy sea.
That fairy world I found ; the very air
Of paradise it breathed—how mild and free
The summer nights, and how beyond compare
The dawns were fragrant and the days were fair !

How often where that charmed land doth rest,
Girt by its charmed ocean many a mile,
Have I sailed deep into the purple west
And dropped along the coast from isle to isle
With full drawn sails; or drifted in the smile
Of dead-calm ocean noondays; or assayed
The embowered river mouths, a little while
Mooring my light white-winged craft, home-made,
'Neath wooded shores of cool voluptuous shade,

Where as she lay the dark green water laughed
And dimpled round her in the shadowy cove;
Home-made she was, the light white-winged craft;
The planks I cut, the bolts and nails I drove,
Wild wind and wave ere now had sought to prove;
My home, my bed she was; from the great deep
My lenten fare she furnished; free to rove
Ev'n as I would she made me, free to keep
What hours I would, and when I would to sleep.

I wandered on with joy for ever new
In seeking still some ever lovelier place;
The very wind rippled the dancing blue
And my white sails wrought into curves that trace—
Ev'n as the lines upon a human face
Express the soul within—the purpose fair
Of Nature, yearning always to embrace
Beauty and joy—ev'n to conceive and bear
Children of beauty to the formless air.

And when the shining world was all asleep
In the hushed loveliness of summer nights;
When the full moon was hung above the deep

Intensely still in star-forsaken heights ;
And in the coast succeeding harbour lights
Would open for a little and be gone ;
Moving alone through such tranced summer nights
Over the luminous sea my sails held on
Till in the dawn the moon grew pale and wan.

Or, when the wind was high, the night was dark,
And then the tardy day desiréd most,
On the wild waste my solitary bark
The streaky dawn discovered like a ghost,
And lying heaped with cloud the angry coast :—
And memories many a fair or dreadful one
The mariner's admiring soul may boast,
But, now most dreadful, now the loveliest, none
To match the sea beneath a rising sun.

And I have spent upon the lone sand dune
The autumn night ; across the gusty sky
The driving clouds revealed or hid the moon,
And not another human soul was by ;
Only from where the ebbing tide left dry
The river flats there came upon the wind
The curlew's moving and mysterious cry,
And in that plaintive music more defined
Some superstitious spectre of the mind.

(O, winged sorrow ! melancholy bird !
Some poet's wandering ghost thou surely art,
Unseen by ignorant eyes ; remotely heard
Over the sea at night ; become a part
Of nature and the grief that broke thy heart.

Familiar as a ghost to come and go
 'Twixt nature and the spirit-world thou art,
With secret consolation, if to know,
Or to have known, the worst can heal thy woe.)

I slept ; and waking in the very place
 Where Nature so forbidding seemed before,
Wondered how easily another face
 She wears, and all the dark mysterious shore
 Is changed ; and there the autumn twilight hoar,
Through a cold fog o'er hill and river drawn,
 I watched ; and still it brightened more and more
Till the pale moon sank o'er the wooded lawn,
And earth and sea grew silver with the dawn.

The winds had fallen, and the curlew gone ;
 Those bare mud flats up to the verdurous brim
The spring-tide filled ; in its smooth bosom shone
 The steel blue heaven ; the gulls that wheel or swim
 Thereon are wrought—the ships, tall masted, trim,
Rigged—all as if in silver filigree ;
 Till presently behold the scarlet rim
Of the great sun, the power and life to be
Of that cold world, spring from the eastern sea !

—O, that my sails were once again unfurled
 Upon the salt sea winds that I might flee
Far from the work and turmoil of the world,
 Far o'er the life and languor of the sea !
O, that my white sails and myself might be
There where my dreaming spirit doth abide ;
 There where my keel, swift as my will and free,

Might drive, and fall, and musically slide
In troughs of foam over the heaving tide !

O, once again for hours of gracious ease
On the blue sea to watch the shining day,
Subject no more to these sharp tyrannies
Of earth that wear the living soul away :
Having boon Nature only to obey ;
No love, no vain ambition, no vile greed
Of wealth, no idle hope nor blank dismay
In these wild projects, once achieved that breed
Some new desire, some more imperious need.

—If love, such love as sailors learn to use
On the wide sea ; love that can do no wrong,
But on its own sweet dreams doth feed and muse
With lips that move in sad perpetual song ;
Love purified by separations long
Of selfish care and dull satiety ;
Love that not only tender is but strong,
And in the bitterness of each “ goodbye ”
Hath learnt the dreadful secret, How to die.

—The curlew whistles, and the night comes down ;
And far the comfortable homes appear
That beckon kindly from the lighted town,
And not another human soul is near ;
But through my limbs a cold delicious fear
Begins to steal, and from eternity
Great Nature asks the soul, “ What dost thou here ?
“ Canst thou endure my naked face to see
“ And learn, The world was never made for thee ? ”

ANIMA MUNDI.

THE Soul that labours blindly to escape
From the dark bonds of Matter, issuing through
With power in that perpetual birth to shape
All nature to the beautiful anew ;

The Soul that strove in flower and bird and beast
Since out of chaos first the world began,
From that long travail found herself released,
To finer issues in the Soul of Man.

She knew herself the soul of all she saw ;
Through heaven and earth diffused, from pole to pole,
The Beautiful in nature and the Law
Were forms and motions of the human soul,

Wherein she ranged at will—wherein she grew
Familiar with herself, the Pure, the True.

MARTYRS.

LOVERS, though dear to Nature's heart, who bear
A mortal pain so often at their own ;

Poets, women, saints—their cruel illusions fair,
As she requires, conceived or overthrown ;—

By passion, creed, imagination fond, .

Driven every way to ill-endured extremes ;
Enthusiasts sweet, prone to her subtle wand,

Men serve the deep enchantress in their dreams.

Darkly consulting Nature !—Could she trust

A share of larger vision to her child,
Then might his unafflicted will be just,
His warring inclinations reconciled,

And her converging purposes require
Martyrs no more to faith nor blind desire.

NIRVANA.

TO that high heaven, O could my soul expire,
Where not the loveliest dreams of earth remain,
In contemplation to escape desire,
And disappoint the ministers of pain ;

I know, scorning at once thy glorious veil
Of flesh, a spirit of immortal light,
That thou, pale temptress of my peace, would'st sail
Above me still, invading every height

Of thought or vision ere my soul possessed
Her stern advantage, thinking to be free ;
For I that heaven where thou art not my quest
Can only meditate in terms of thee—

A heaven that's all, like mountains in the sun,
Afire with thee when I have thought thee gone.

MISGIVINGS.

WHEN I of some too passionate desire
 Become the prey ; or melt away and flow
 Like water uncontained before some dire
Result, some dark presentiment, of woe ;

Or, if the Gods their sumptuous gifts increase,
 Am fearful still, incredulous of joy,
I know within my soul the eternal peace
 She craves is hers to make or to destroy ;

That this unrest not heaven inflicts but I,
 Too curious where earth is broad and sweet
To meddle with the secrets of the sky,
 Or choose the road beneath my inconstant feet ;

For where the road's most steep and high the air
Of heaven is pure, of earth the prospect fair.

TO A FAIR ABSTRACTION.

O H, is it to avenge some idle tone
Of my rash love that had no right to be,
Or to confess a weakness of thy own,
That thou hast crossed the illimitable sea

To vex my sleep?—'tis not in sport the fire
Of days gone by thou'dst kindle in my breast ;
Heaven grant 'twas not thy own unformed desire
In the deep night that would not let thee rest.

With what soft incense, what rude sacrifice,
Of love should I appease thy glorious shade,
Who love yet love thee not ? by what device
Enjoy the friend and exorcise the maid ;

Who than a simple friend may not profess
To love thee more, and cannot love thee less ?

CYNTHIA.

LONG nights in heaven the winter moon I saw,
And, seeing her, I more desired thee ;
So strange a power she hath to move and draw
My soul, unresting as the tidal sea.

And now from heaven the winter moon hath gone,
And in the early twilight thou art here ;
May in mid-winter ; moon where moon was none ;
In the December morning, dark and drear,

A light upon wet field and purple wood,
A fragrance in the misty air—all day
Before my dreaming eyes thy spirit stood
In mortal loveliness, and passed away

At night to rule in heaven again, where soon
I saw with strange desire the orbiting moon.

LOVE.

O LOVE, for whom the tedious days with fear,
Desire, and hope, are terrible ; for whom
So cruel the separating gulfs appear
Of distance, auguring the loveless tomb ;

Who art, though from eternity a guest,
So much the vassal here of Time and Chance ;
Whose mighty dreams, that will not let thee rest,
Such petty cares forbid thee to advance ;

Much thwarted Tyrant ! this our bondage thou,
To make us free, dost bitterly increase ;
And ere thou set the laurel on our brow
Of victory and everlasting peace,

Wouldst show us how faith, wisdom, peace, might be
Unprofitable, easy, but for thee.

A FLOWER OF THE AGES.

WITH what mysterious art thy flower-like face,
Through what long centuries the joy, the care,
Of all the passionate founders of the race,
Did Love thy mystic elements prepare ?

Of such tumultuous fires as now they light
Thy sweet proportions reminiscent seem ;
The convolutions of an incense white,
Thy face the wistful glory of a dream,

Which with desire, and joy, and pains untold,
The love-learned generations brought to birth,
Of their aspiring soul the purest mould
Breathed visibly upon the plastic earth,

That Love, through these admiring eyes, might see
His dream fulfilled, nay, glorified in thee.

TO MY NEPHEW CHRISTOPHER.

CHristopher, first of those thy grandsire now
In heaven awaits to justify his seed
Now to a second issue come, be thou
His to the death, be his in thought and deed.

Doubly descended from the gentle race
Of those who keep the spirit pure and whole,
Thy father's and thy mother's child, a grace
Twofold should light upon thy infant soul

To grant my prayer. Like her who gave thee birth
Be pure and true and sweetly serious be ;
Be as thy father full of kindly mirth,
Be strong, be wise, be temperate as he.

Of thy rich seed, O, yield the hungry bread
Who seek in thee the living—and the Dead !

TO MARGARET.

DEAR, be not sad because the world is cold
To this first bloom of thy adventurous art,
Blind to these lovely parables that hold
Each some ethereal doctrine of thy heart.

The March winds thus that nip the weaklier shoots
Make room thereby for the luxuriant spring;
Bow to the wintry blast, but strike thy roots
Deeper for that unkindly buffetting.

Let thine art grow as those sweet wild-flowers still,
That grow unseen, careless of praise or blame,
Yet famous have become against their will,
A language rich and beautiful, that name

Tracts of the earth and seasons of the year,
Emblems of love, and things to children dear.

TO MY WIFE.

DAUGHTER, my wife, of some patrician house,
When I those large and soft blue eyes behold,
Those sweetly archéd, finely pencilled brows,
That hair, thy crown, of immaterial gold—

Thou, robed in blue, against the firelit wall
On thy low couch reclined ; I inwardly
Fostering my half-formed thought, and thou the small
Dread vehicle of better thoughts to be—

When from my deep but ineffectual dream
I raise my thoughts to thee, I know that thou
Hast joined thy strength with mine in that pure stream
Of life my strained purpose to endow

With power in some new race, in some fresh page
All my perplexéd thoughts to disengage.

SPRING.

IN those blue eyes a softer blue, a clear
Unclouded heaven—in heaven a softer blue—
Speaks of that blissful season of the year
When all created things their kinds renew.

Spring comes apace, and thou canst bear to look
Now on her generous beauty ; thee no more
The budding flowers, the nesting birds rebuke ;
A sweet confederate in their mystic lore

They claim thee now—a member and a part
Of nature ;—no more alien and alone
At the great festival thy woman's heart
Shall ache to see an offspring not thy own.

Of this fair spring thou mayst without alloy
Share the rich life, the universal joy.

TO MY DAUGHTER BEATRICE.

WHAT glorious omens do attend thy birth,
Fair child !—the fruit trees like a white sea foam
Brake into flower with thee ; the genial earth
Made haste with summer to adorn thy home.

If by this golden earnest of his prime
Summer be judged—the harvest by the flower—
Thou in the vaward of a beauteous time
Art surely come.—In this auspicious hour

Just thirty years ago by thy grandsire
The tie was formed, the precious seed was sown,
Of which heaven grant in thee to his desire
The fruit be seen, the virtue handed down ;

Ev'n as in that sweet crescent of the new
The old moon glows.—O, prove the omens true !

TO MURIEL.

WHAT shall I wish thee?—now the mystic tale,
Thrice seven sweet summers, thou hast made
complete,

And not a friend with some good wish can fail
To lay his simple offering at thy feet.

Let others wish thee joy and length of years,
Wealth, friends, the great felicities of love ;
Sweets that do often prove the cause of tears,
Fair things that time shall spoil or death remove.

But I a thing more glorious wish thee now
Which nothing but thyself hath power to harm ;
I wish thee thy sweet self ; be only thou
True to thyself of yesterday ; the charm

Of womanhood to wear, the power to win,
O, keep inviolate the Child within !

THE STRAITS.

ON that dim shore the living day below
A long desired, a Godlike stranger waits ;
And thou a brief and perilous voyage must go
To fetch him safe across the shadowy straits

Which at the portals of the world defer
All access hither with tempestuous night ;
Yea, though a saviour of the world he were,
A creature of our dreams, a child of light.

The adventure great, but great the guerdon is ;
And thou hast deep reserves on which to draw ;
Love for the high, the sweet philosophies,
Faith in the justice of eternal law,

To fortify thy soul ere thou embark
On thy dread voyage through Chaos and the Dark.

THE PILGRIM'S RETURN.

THE Soul returns. O, thrice beloved and sweet,
Thy direful pilgrimage was not in vain,
Driven like a wild bird to what dim retreat,
What shadowy exile, on the wings of pain !

There on the borders of the vast abyss
Blindly she hovers like a frightened dove ;
Nothing she knows, and nothing feels, save this ;
The means are righteous for the end is love.

Tossed blindly there, like some ill-fated bark
Struck by a cyclone of the Indian seas,
Through those dread hours of tempest and the dark
She feels a God whose wondrous purposes

Rule the vexed ocean, secretly inform
The womb of night, the vortex of the storm.

THE QUEEN.

NOT to adorn with some unrivalled grace
Of wit or beauty her imperial throne,
But to exalt the virtue of the race
She ruled,—to make her peoples thoughts her own

Though wiser than we knew ; our ways of life
Her own, but purer than before ; to be
Such that the stature of the perfect wife
And mother in the Queen we learned to see—

This was her glory. Sciences and arts—
The extent and period of her power—these shed
A glamour on the crown ; but most our hearts
Mourned for the woman when the queen was dead.

A Queen so loved, a woman virtuous more,
So vast an empire never mourned before.

ANIMA VERIS.

THE heart's desire to pass the sealéd lips
Is fain as a caged bird to fly ;
For Spring is breaking through the bare tree-tips
With tufts of buds against the silver sky.

It is the spring, and on all sides I hear
The love-notes of the nesting birds ;
And undertones of music in my ear
That wait, but wait in vain, for wingéd words.

Some depth there is that may not be employed
Of speechless thought and vain desire ;
The strains that draw from that mysterious void
Were never caught upon an earthly lyre.

Through the green woods and on the odorous wind
They steal, as anciently they stole ;
Notes of a harmony still undivined,
But always half familiar to the soul ;

From where the dreaming spirit doth abide
Of music at the heart of things ;
And darkly moves that undercurrent tide,
The source of fair and never failing springs—

That tide that breaks along the world in flower,
And in the woods is bursting through,
From bud to leaf unsheathing hour by hour
Their tender foliage to the April blue.

We know not God, except that He is Love;
Nor Life, except that it is His;
In spring God whispers from the heaven above,
He breathes and moves in everything that is.

And in these moments of eternal worth
Thou haply shalt become divine
Of something kindred in the things of earth
Unto the things of spirit that are thine.

The purple tree tops melt in silver haze;
A fruitful silence broods over the land;
And doth some tenderness of bygone days
Not teach at least thy heart to understand?

A NIGHT ON THE DART.

'T WAS midnight on the ebb ; and soon
Above a lustrous crest
Of wooded hills the pale half moon
Was falling in the west.

On each bright spar and glancing oar
The moonlight glitters white and hoar,
And broods on each mysterious shore,
Of the wide world at rest.

The moon behind a bank of cloud
Has set, and gone her light ;
Short claps of thunder, sharp and loud,
Are rattling on the right ;
And ever indistinctlier loom
Through the increasing depths of gloom
Those banks that shut us in a tomb
Of black and ghastly night.

Behold ! how the thick veil at last
Is riven far and wide,
And those high river banks aghast
Reveals on either side.
A seed of fire in the dun air
Dilates ; a world embracing glare
Dazzles, and dies, and leaves us there
In darkness on the tide.

And—we stiff-stricken to the core
By that pervading light—
A long reverberating roar
Dumbfounds the listening night.

As when through Alpine vales the shock
Is heard of some far-falling rock,
And echoing precipices mock
The crash from height to height.

And then with palpitating shapes
The dreadful night became
Alive—distinct with shores and capes,
But never twice the same.—
And rocks and trees leapt out among
The trembling shadows that they flung,
As all about them flashed and hung
Those blinding shafts of flame.

It passed; the storm with lessening peals
Went muttering o'er the wold;
But wonders more the night reveals
And wondering eyes behold.
For fiercely from the starless train
Of storm clouds hissed hard rods of rain,
And the dark water lashed again
To breadths of burnished gold.

The stream—whose gods with heaven conspire
To keep the pageant bright—
With leaping rings and sprays of fire
Is splendid in the night
It seems the immortals cannot tire,
But each his opposite
And to a measure wild and sweet
The powers of storm and darkness meet
Unseen, whose thousand dancing feet
Are shodden all with light.

THE MAIDEN SACRIFICE.

SO that ill-omened King put on the yoke
Of brief necessity ; a treacherous wind,
His much wrought soul, too fatally inclined,
Set from the cruel North ; dread words he spoke

Of his adventurous thought, so rashly fired
By those dark counsels—that a daughter's life
To speed the war that should avenge a wife
The Virgin Goddess bitterly required ;

A sacrifice to speed his fleet that lay
Wind-bound at Aulis.—He must undergo
Those words unblest and fraught with future woe—
Such words bear hard on mortals ;—he must slay

His child ; her prayers, her cries upon the name
Of “ Father,” and her tender years untaught
The blissful rites of love, they set at naught,
Those chiefs, blood-thirsty judges, much to blame.

They steeled their hearts for all that she was young
And fair exceedingly ; her maiden zone
Foully undid—the greater to atone
The lesser crime—whilst other hymns were sung

Than those of marriage ; then—her sweet drawn breath
Confined and muffled, lest the victim's curse
They should provoke—her piteous looks averse—
They hastened her, the trembling bride of Death,

Before the altar; at her father's word
They raised her, like a helpless kid, aloft,
Drooping in spirit, whilst her raiment soft
Flowed to the earth, and not a sound was heard.

But she, sore fain to speak, as she lay thus,
And to the ground her saffron veil let fall,
Fair as some fine-wrought marble, smote them all
With deeply entreating eyes most piteous,

Moving their hearts; for often her pure voice
In the high hall, her presence breathing peace,
Would grace the third libation, to increase
Her Father's name in song, and to rejoice

His heart, now cold, their hearts now moved in vain;—
What need we more relate?—for what befell
We neither saw nor much desire to tell;
Not unaccomplished was the deadly strain

Of that old prophet's counsel. Future woe
Justice requires, and retribution due
Will come to pass. Then we must see it through;
Till then, grief out of season, let it go.

IN TENEBRIS.

THE trees are wild to-night ; the wind is loud
In all their roaring branches ; on the right
A low red moon ; and strangely clear and bright
Through shattered fragments of forbidding cloud
There wanes and ebbs the windy evening light ;
But here the groaning darkness foils my sight
Strained for her—my ear, intently bowed
To catch a footfall in the gusty night,

But vexed with ominous phantoms ;—in the west
Across those windswept fields of twilight gray
Strange monsters—grazing horses—stand and stray ;
One came to snuff my shoulder—not a guest
That pleased me well, but frightened soon away ;—
And now the heavens are drained of stormy day ;
Night still more awful grows on such a quest
For the impatient soul to brook delay.

But, lo, from that dense black tempestuous wood,
Behold she comes, O, true beyond compare !—
What, feet behind thee, Love ?—nay, like to scare
The boldest heart upon a night so rude
Those driven leaves.—I thought, But will she dare
To come to-night ?—A man might well despair
To watch the mouth and grisly solitude
Of dark Avernus for a thing so fair.

HEIRLOOM.

IN the hour of change and travail we, remembering thy face,

Fain would nerve our strained purpose with the
heaven-descended grace,
Virtue, strength, in thee perfected, of thy pure and
gentle race.

Ever taught by her who loved thee, there were mingled
in our blood

Those high dreams and aspirations; thee through her
we understood :—

“All his soul was bowed within him worshipping the
great and good.”

“Much, had he been spared, for heaven, much he would
have done for man ;

“Has the mantle of your Father fallen on his children—
can

“You the work to fuller issues carry on which he
began ?”

Still to thee, and her aspiring love, O teach us to be
true ;

Thy great work and last commandment let us not forget
to do ;

From the old world thy ancestral virtue bringing to the
new.

Thine a race, like some clear river, from its far retiréd
source

Long with cities unfamiliar, held upon an equal course,
From the tributary heavens drawing silent strength and
force ;

Not in dissipating uses, shoals of noisy action hurled ;
Virtue there, and meditation, lay through flowery
pastures curled,

Peaceful waters undiverted, unpolluted by the world ;

And, though vowed in all its sources from of old to every
art,

Awed by God, the passion ripened slowly, bearing little
part

In those simple lives, that inward vision, of the pure in
heart ;

Who, like lovers to the relic of a passion old and gray,
Into ancient forms breathed faith and virtue, clinging
day by day

Closer to the sweet tradition as the substance passed
away.

Since thy race in thee was wedded to as fair a sister
stream,

'Twixt new shores, to larger issues, it conducts the early
dream,

Nascent types inaugurating where the old appeared
supreme ;

Still, though less direct a witness of eternal God to man,
Dreamers, but the poet dreamer rather than the puritan ;
Dreamers from the mighty rearward hurried to the
drooping van ;

You from God in heaven, but we from God in you
deriving our

Laws, traditions, aspirations—power, if ever any power
From the father's veins descending, may become the
childrens' dower.—

Power there is, a draft on virtue ; by the just decrees of
Fate

Virtue labour, genius virtue follows ; state succeeds to
state ;

'Tis the sons of virtuous parents only who are wise or
great.

Power there is, a draft on virtue ; genius—else were
genius none—

Born of love, the consummation of the mystic Three in
One ;

God the Holy Ghost proceeding as of old from God the
Son.

Labour, the probation first of God the Father, is the
root,

Virtue, love, the glorious flowers of human progress ;
absolute

Truth and beauty, manners, arts, and letters are the
golden fruit.

Then, when power self-conscious, genius self-admiring
grows, and art

Self-directed speaks a language not the language of the
heart ;

When her natural grace the maiden forfeits to enact a
part,

'Tis the Fall of man—the winter of the spirit ;—paradise
Lost again to erring mortals ; 'tis that sin for which the
price

Love must still come down to render in the appointed
sacrifice.

'Tis the tragedy of Eden ever on a higher plane
Re-enacted—knowledge by the fact of knowledge made
in vain

Ere 'tis disciplined by labour and by love redeemed again.

Cycles these and epicycles of the spirit ; circular
Orbits, loops, and retrogressions—linkéd each to all
they are,

Satellites to shining planets, planets to the parent star.

Individuals and races, races and the human race
Thus their mystic evolutions suffer, terms of power and
grace,

Terms of retrogression, punctual each to the assignéd
place.

You the crescent phase accomplished ; you on the
ascending arc

Left us to complete the shining orbit ; you the sacred
spark

Nursed—let us fan high the beacon ere it fades into the
dark.

From your lovely old-world gardens, spreading many a
pleasant rood

Lawns, white paths, and flowering alleys ; from your
peaceful homes that stood

Ivy-wreathed and massive, monumental of the just and
good ;—

Homes in many a latter summer linkéd with our childish
loves ;

Pebbled yards and stabled horses ; morning from the
garden groves

Through our lattice windows streaming murmurous with
the choral doves ;

Homes to city nurtured children still a golden memory ;
Walls of fruit and crystal fountains ; cedars rearing dark
and high

From the smooth green sward mysterious cones of night
against the sky ;

Curious attics, trusty servants ;—treasures quaint that
seemed to mock

Time and change—to breathe and tell us of an old and
gentle stock ;

In the hall the branchéd antlers, on the stairs the cuckoo
clock ;

At the table gentle faces, lovely china, homely fare—
No base economy, no sinful luxury was suffered there—
Afterwards the glorious Bible reading and the silent
prayer :—

From those homes where virtue native as the virgin
flowers had been

Where, above its wharfs and bridges, some far river
flows between

Wood-emboweréd hills and fertile pastures ever fresh
and green,

Coming as the grateful river cometh to the thirsty plain—
Cities, where it flows, are founded, harvests planted, not
in vain—

With the world of men and fervid city life you mixed
again.

Withered facts upon the living waters of the soul in you
Lived again to all their ancient uses luminous and true ;
Church and state, laws, institutions, arts, and letters,
rose anew.

Parliaments, kings, prophets, priests, and poets—all you
heard and saw
Childlike were in you transfigured, coming with
mysterious awe
More divinely to interpret, strictly to fulfill, the law.

From your unadornéd worship, from your hours of silent
prayer,
Having learned the secret meaning, now you came to
claim a share
Of that age-long music unto which the human soul is
heir ;

First in solemn rites and symbols learning how frail
sense affords
Strength and rapture to the spirit—listening to the
mighty chords
Of some vast cathedral organ wedded to tremendous
words ;

Litanies, and psalms, and anthems ; words and voices
that express
Souls of old-world prophets, poets, martyrs ; voices of
distress ;
Words of hope and consolation ; voices lifted up to bless ;
Valued not by you as perfect truth—the wisdom pure
and whole
Of God—but man's rude efforts darkly to approach the
shining goal ;

Beautiful surmises, fruitful errors, of the human
soul.

But that one pure voice and lonely, for so many drowned
and lost

Midst the world's conflicting voices, you obeyed and
valued most,

"I am God" proclaiming, preaching God in man, the
Holy Ghost.

As of old to God existing, therefore in your hearts began
That sweet doctrine of the eternal sacredness of man to
man;

Many, thence in need of comfort, where those healing
waters ran,

Came—before how often disappointed—came and
quenched their thirst;

In your eyes your God apparent with the souls of men
conversed,

What was true in each compelling, what was good
perceiving first;

What you loved receiving gladly; never thinking to
pretend

Joy in what you loved not; friendship never seeking for
an end

Not the highest; therefore never disappointed in a
friend;

What was vile, though disregarded in the light of those
pure eyes,

All more dreadfully confounding; startled from their
frail disguise

Evil thoughts and guilty motives steal away in dumb
surprise—

In the course of that sheer virtue, found unready, pale
and blanch,

Like a traveller in some tangled passage threatened root
and branch

By the sudden smoke and thunder of an Alpine avalanche.

And, the meanest, that impending ruin spared, the
expected rod

Of your wrath to mercy turning, less unworthily they
trod

Earth, as though in some dread vision they had nearer
been to God.

Not with you the sword descended, nor did you espouse
the ways,

Prone to loud but feeble virtue, of our pulpit—platform—
days ;

Yours the dumb rebuke of knowledge painfully withholding
praise.

And, in love with all things lovely, slow to wrath, your
hearts were warm

Not alone with loyal passion, nor the heat of blind reform ;
But the calm in which you brooded was the calm before
a storm.

Coming without observation, from the mighty Past you
drew

To the threshold of the Future, all the virtue summed in
you

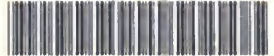
Of the old-world's deep intention to the welfare of the
new.

You the storm-cloud were, the shining sword suspended
by a thread ;
You the stream, so long remotely making in its moorland
bed,
Now above the iron harness gathered to a mighty head.
We, could we the vast pretension kindle with a holy awe
On the grace and power within us of a virtuous race to
draw,
Could we but believe the lovely omen and obey the law,
Were the grateful rain, the rolling thunder, and the
falling sword ;
We the current of your long confined meditations poured
In music ; the precipitated virtue, and the spoken word.
When in us your power is waning, teach us what the
living source ;
When in us the warrior planet retrogrades upon his
course—
When the tragedy of Eden overtakes us—reinforce
You our lives with single-hearted faith and passion ;
keep us true
To the high traditions, fair examples, we derive from
you,
That in us your cumulative virtue, issuing freely through,
Purge the world of arts and letters, drive the vast
machine of state,
To our weak resolves and fevered efforts adding force
and weight,
Like a noble head of water falling on the wheel of Fate.



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